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ABSTRACT

The field of intercultural communication study may be best explored by analyzing sojourners, individuals who leave their homes and travel abroad to learn as students, workers, or occupational trainees. A review of the early research reveals that the similarities of well-traveled sojourners' communication behavior and general outlook is greater than their expected cultural differences. In one study, questionnaires were mailed to 43 trainees from 15 different countries who had resided in the United States before returning home to their countries. Approximately half were returned. Although there are obvious problems with sampling and generalizability in a study of this size, responses were important because they revealed genuine feelings on the part of the sojourners. Among the problems researchers may face are that sponsorship of sojourner programs is now so diffuse that locating and gaining access to the travelers is likely to be difficult, and that charges of clandestine activities and intelligence operations occurring under the guise of academic activities have partially compromised the credibility of academic researchers abroad. However, studying sojourners as excellent sources of data and insights about intercultural communication remains an important area in that research. (DF)

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THE SOJOURNER: A CONTINUING SOURCE OF INSIGHT ABOUT CULTURAL ENTRY AND RE-ENTRY

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Abstract

The study of intercultural communication was launched from a base of investigation into the experiences of sojourners. Both educational and training sojourners were studied by various investigators and the result was both descriptive and comparative research. Subsequently, a number of problems have arisen to inhibit attention to cross-cultural research in general and sojourn research in particular.

Jacobson has proposed a strategy for research which can be implemented for monitoring the complete experience of a sojourner from pre-departure to re-settlement. Ellingsworth designed a way to examine the foreign portion of a work sojourner's experience in both maintaining cultural identity and contacting the host culture.

With the growth of interest in intercultural research and theory and the expansion of graduate work in this area, the 1980's sojourner still represents a viable source for further inquiry.

THE SOJOURNER: A CONTINUING SOURCE OF INSIGHT ABOUT CULTURAL ENTRY AND RE-ENTRY

Introduction

Much of the early research upon which the field of intercultural communication study was launched in the 1950's and 1960's had to do with the sojourner. This term has come into common use to describe an individual who leaves his home and travels abroad to learn, either as a student, a worker, or an occupation-oriented trainee.[1] These persons are of interest to the communication scholar because they represent identifiable and potent agents in the cultural diffusion process. They are concurrently sources, messages, channels and receivers. They influence and are influenced by home culture and host culture. In many ways, of course, they are not a typical or representative sample of the host culture during the sojourn. Yet aside from the focused contacts of government officials and commercial representatives and the superficial encounters of tourism, they represent one of the major face-to-face means by which cultures may come to "know" about one another. Because of this pivotal role, the writer proposes that persons interested in intercultural communication should devote more time and attention to learning about sojourners before, during, and after their trips abroad. Such knowledge is of potential benefit in preparing the traveler for his stay, for helping him during the sojourn, and for easing

his home transition; it may also increase understanding of the use of interpersonal, intercultural, and mass communication.

Research On Educational Sojourning

The decade of the fifties saw a tremendous increase in educational travel abroad, much of it involving degree-seeking students who came to U.S. universities. There was some counter-flow of U.S. students to European universities and of U.S. faculty members on temporary overseas appointments. This activity gave rise to research on adjustment and acculturation of the sojourners, which has been defined by John Gullahorn as "A cycle of adult socialization occurring under conditions where previous socialization offers varying degrees of facilitation and interference in the new learning context."[2] The dominant research model was the "U-curve of adjustment" perceived by S. Lysgaard and utilized by M.B. Smith and associates at the University of Michigan.[3] This hypothesis assumed that normatively a student's experience could be graphed as a somewhat flattened capital U, which proceeded from a brief, acceptive "tourist phase," through a period of declining adaptation toward a "bottoming out," which then developed into a "coming to terms" phase which resulted in increasing adaptability, possibly stimulated in part by positive expectations of returning home. One identifiable variation of this pattern was by students who did not "bottom out" and "come to terms," but whose maladjustment intensified, so that they acknowledged their failure and returned home, or become self-imposed fugitives, or even committed suicide.

Another group over-adjusted and became identified with the host culture to the point of rejecting home culture, becoming traumatized at the prospect of forced return to their home cultures.[4]

The tide of "foreign students" begun in the early 1950's continued well into the next decade, though their presence became sufficiently commonplace so as to attract less research effort than previously. The Gullahorns became interested in post-return adjustment, particularly among American sojourners, and postulated a "double-U" model which proposed that post-return adaptation would parallel the experience of the sojourn--that the individual whose adaptation to the foreign experience was ultimately high would go through somewhat the same phases of re-adaptation to his home culture on return.

Research on the Training Sojourner

By about 1958 the United States (and to a lesser extent the Soviet Union) became heavily engaged in a "foreign aid" concept which involved working with countries which had signed bi-lateral aid agreements with the U.S. to identify promising professionals and technicians and to offer such persons the opportunity of visiting the United States for specialized training programs ranging from a few months to a year. These persons were different in several ways from the foreign students: their age was generally between 25 and 40; they had completed formal education and were occupationally established at the time of their selection

for training; most were occupying supervisory or middle-management roles in their work groups or were schedule for promotion to management roles upon their return. Their motivations regarding the foreign sojourn were thus task-oriented and focused on a brief stay abroad, as contrasted with younger, pre-employed degree-oriented students, whose stay was measured in years, and whose future was less defined.

By 1960, the International Cooperation Administration, later the United States International Cooperation Agency (USAID) was sponsoring about 5,000 of these short-term trainees per year, a tempo which continued into the late 60's when interest in bi-lateral aid programs had begun to decline. The training concept continues, now shared among AID, other bi-national programs sponsored principally by Sweden, West Germany, Japan, Canada, and by a variety of private foundations, businesses and multi-national organizations. By contrast with the moderately extensive body of research and theory on foreign students, the literature on non-student trainees is disappointingly small. One landmark study was the work of John Useem and associates with a group of technicians and scholars from India who had received foreign training and then returned home. Useem proposed that their millieu should be labeled "the third culture" to indicate that they existed in a synthetic ambience made up of elements and processes of the home and host cultures.[5]

In a discussion of literature on non-academic sojourning, the

writer acknowledges awareness of studies published in the 1960's on U.S. Peace Corpsmen abroad and states that a few of these make a direct contribution to communication aspects of sojourn research. More often, however, the studies employ limited attitudinal scales about morale and adjustment, are often highly anecdotal, and like most other sojourn research, are not sufficiently longitudinal to trace developments from pre-departure through return adjustment.

One of the more comprehensive attempts to examine the post-sojourn attitudes and communication begaviors was by Paul Deutschman, Huber Ellingsworth and John McNelly, *Communication and Social Change in Latin America*[4]. Unable to collect pre-departure data, they set up a design involving approximately 150 middle-level professionals and technicians who had spent several months in the U.S. and had been back at work in their own countries for at least a year. These were paired on the basis of field choice with an equal number of "counterparts"-- persons of the same rank in the same work group, but who had not experienced foreign training. The general hypothesis that the ex-trainees would be more active in interpersonal communication, use more different communicative methods, be more cosmopolite as consumers of domestic and foreign mass media, have more contact with foreigners, and have more favorable attitudes toward change was confirmed by the data. There was also expectably a larger number of self-reported cases of difficulty in adjusting to the current work pattern among ex-trainees than among non-trainees.

Employing the same interview schedule and attitude instrument, but without the counterpart feature, Ellingsworth conducted a "Pilot-Study of the Communication Behavior of 29 Japanese Change Agents" in 1969[7] These subjects were mature teachers from Japan who had spent a year on the Teacher Interchange Program at the East-West Center in Honolulu and then returned home. The goal of this study was to initiate inter-regional comparisons of the communication behavior of "change agents" and to explore tentatively the possible existence of a world-wide population of sub-elite ex-sojourners who share foreign experience and whose similarities in communication behavior and outlook are greater than their apparent cultural differences.

In their expressed choices for communication channels in promoting change, the patterns of the Latins and Orientals were generally similar except that the Japanese valued all visual channels more highly and placed less value on interposed means, such as memos and telephones. Concerning the receptiveness of persons whom they contacted regarding introduction of new ideas, both groups preferred to work inside their organizations, with the Japanese considerably more optimistic about the viability of subordinates than were the Latins. On the subject of work contacts with foreigners, the groups were virtually identical in range and amount of contact.

As for conversation and socializing away from work, the

Japanese preferred to talk socially with family members; the Latins preferred to go out with their friends for social conversation.

In use of mass media, the mean amount of utilization was virtually identical, but the patterns were different. Japanese used more newspapers, domestic radio, books and TV; the Latins utilized more magazines, motion pictures, and technical publications and journals. Short-wave radio listening was commonly reported at an identical level of use. U.S. stations were heard by almost all the listeners in both groups, with BBC second.

The comparisons here generally support the proposition that despite marked differences in history, economics, politics, religion and ethnicity, these two groups of educated, foreign-trained sub-elites are quite similar in their behaviors as sources and receivers of communication and in a more comprehensive sense, as agents of change.

In a more recent (1972) study which included some of the same inquiry methods, Ellingsworth and Florangel Z. Rosario-Braid examined the interpersonal communication behavior and media use of similar groups of sub-elites employed in population and family planning organizations in the Philippines and Malaysia. Almost all of the persons in middle and upper management positions had participated in at least one foreign training sojourn; some had

made several such trips. Apparent cultural differences in interpersonal styles were that the Malaysians relied somewhat more heavily on formal channels and interposed methods while the Filipinos favored face-to-face contact and group discussion.* In media use and in contact with foreigners, the whole study group displayed the same cosmopolite dimension observed in the Latin American and Japanese ex-trainees. "Counterpart" data were not collected for the Japanese, Filipinos and Malaysians, thus requiring catuion in generalizing, but it generally appears true that ex-sojourners display a common pattern of communication behavior and media use regardless of nation or region, with some differences which may be a function of their cultures and/or geographical locations.

While most of the cited post-sojourn research involved foreign travel to interview the subjects, Ellingsworth and Terry Welden in 1968 employed mail interviews with some success.* Ellingsworth had conducted a pre-departure seminar in March, 1967, for 43 AID trainees from 15 countries who were about to return home. He alerted them that in about a year he would be writing to learn about their experiences. A questionnaire was prepared and air-mailed in June, 1968. About half were eventually returned, a rate considered good in view of the vicissitudes of international air mail and local delivery, especially in Africa and the Middle East. The last questionnaire returned had taken six months to reach the participant. Most of the inquiry concerned evaluation of specific details of the training program, but a final, open-end

question invited the respondent to tell about his re-entry experiences. A few proto-typical responses are reported here. One respondent indicated that he had experienced considerable difficulty because while in the U.S. he had "acquired certain habits, thinkings, and reactions which seemed strange" to his associates. They were harsh wth him and he "changed for the better." Another said he had been warned that his co-workers would be hostile to his new, innovative ideas, but instead they were passive and indifferent to his long absence and his suggestions, which he found very frustrating. A third was a classic "over-adopter" of U.S. ways. He found life in America far more appealing than life back home. Though he had been "trying to make adjustments" he had decided to attempt a return to the U.S. and solicited the help of the researcher in obtaining a job. Seven persons took the occasion to write personal letters which revealed in various ways the triumphs, frustrations, and risks attendant on their sojourns. Mail questionnaire investigation of this sort has serious problems with sampling and generalizability, but produces information rich in human experience.

Some Problems in Sojourn Research

The communication researcher-theorist who believes that sojourners represent a vital link in world-wide cultural diffusion and are a partially untapped source of information about the communication process will find less encouragement and greater challenge in conducting research now than in the past. This is true for a variety of reasons:

1. Sponsorship of sojourn programs is now more diffuse, so that locating and gaining access to the travelers is correspondingly more difficult than it was two decades ago.
2. The growth in national pride and ethnic identity, especially among some newly-independent nations, has complicated acess by researchers who wish to visit other countries for research purposes. Resistance may also be encountered in obtaining data from vistors to ones own country, who may resent being thus regarded as "foreigners" or guinea pigs."
3. Charges of clandestine activities and intelligence operations carried out under the cover of academic and public service activities have partially compromised the credibility of academic researchers abroad, whose motivations were not always clearly understood in the best of times.
4. There are occasional problems in publishing research from bi-national or international ivestigation when the findings are perceived as potentially invidious to the countries involved. Such matters move quickly from a scholarly to a diplomatic level.
5. There is limited funding for general theoretical research, especially for research requiring foreign travel and maintenance, which is by definition relatively expensive. For the desired longitudinal study of sojourners, the cost is compounded.

6. Research of the sort described here, especially that related to the "third-culture" model, may run counter to current social and scholarly ideals concerning cultural identity, at least in the United States. During the 1960's the "Cultural Melting-Pot" thesis which had been held up as the goal of U.S. society was denounced by some writers. The virtues of cultural integrity and multi-ethnic society were presented as a more desirable and realistic goal. It is not the writer's intention to discuss the merits of the "cultural integrity" concept but rather to consider its implication for communication between and among cultural groups. When message flow is predominantly one-way, as in the case of U.S. export of motion pictures and television programs the recipients will almost inevitably feel some discernable impact both on their perceptions of how life is lived in the U.S. and also on the portions of their own lives which are touched by the movies and programs. If there is not a corresponding flow of potent cultural messages back to the United States, the other country will incur on that transaction a "negative balance of trade" in the unending round of cultural diffusion. Efforts to manipulate this process through government regulation and censorship, boycotts, signal-jamming, and the development of "culture-fair communication policies" have been minimally successful so far.

On an individual and interpersonal basis, the cultural diffusion game is much more evenly matched-- indeed, representatives from technological societies may sometimes be at a disadvantage in interchange with persons from older, deeper and less pragmatic societies. But the point is that to *act* is to generate change, to *interact* is to change and be changed as well. The concept of cultural integrity is a beautiful and appealing idea, with two fatal flaws. Whatever a culture's form at a given moment, that form is an unplanned mosaic of how people acted and believed in other times and places, modified and supplemented by the current occupants. There are few, if any, "virgin" cultures.[11]

Intercultural interaction is not "throwing messages over the wall." It is a high-risk activity in which the participants will almost inevitably come away changed. Among the most-needed pieces of research in this area concerns the ideal balance of flexibility and tenacity for a sojourner. There are two ways of failing as a sojourner. One is to be so impervious to the host culture that the individual returns home virtually unchanged by his experience. The other is to be so violated by the host system that home orientation is seriously damaged and identity is threatened.

So the scholar working to develop boundaries for the "third-culture" proposition may encounter opposition from both advocates of "cultural integrity" and from some proponents of intercultural communication study, who have given little attention

to the psychological risks and identity crises arising from prolonged interaction between representatives of differing cultures.[12]

Strategies for Sojourn Research

In promoting sojourn research by communication scholars, Eugene Jacobson has divided up the travel concept into phases which can be individually focused on or viewed collectively by the investigator:[13]

1. *Pre-departure*- a period which may range from a brief non-programmmed interval between travel notification and departure to an elaborate program of training and preparation during the interval. This is the time for the researcher to secure baseline data on communication-related attitudes, expectations and behaviors.
2. *Act of Leaving*-a time of stress in which arrangements for carrying on work during absence and for maintenance of relationships with co-workers, family and friends can have profound implications for re-entry.
3. *Enroute*-a brief interlude characterized by both anxieties and positive expectations which can best be tapped later by ancedotal recall.
4. *Entry Into the Sojourn Area*-this may be brief or extended; it may be easy or troublesome. The act of

entry may be programmed into an orientation program of some sort, handled casually, or characterized by absence of host activity. Lasting impressions of a postitive or negative sort are formed at this sensitive time in the sojourn. It is not a promising time to collect data, though anecdotal recall may be used later.

5. *Exploration*-this is the tourist phase, in which the traveler is a relatively disconnected observer of his new environment and may not have fully accepted that he will live here for a time. He may develop superficial but potent first impressions. He will begin to compare these impressions with pre-departure expectations and be elated or disappointed. His detachment may not be sufficient to make him a good data source at this point.

6. *Tentative Commitment*-the sojourner will next encounter an initial "coming-to-terms" decision in which he accepts the sojourn with reservations which persist throughout the visit, or form an entree into the next phase.

7. *Ultimate Commitment*-those who move beyond the tentative stage find themselves in a positive, adaptive, and productive orientation to the purposes and activities of the sojourn. Research is needed here about what communication-related experience keeps a commitment tentative or encourages fuller acceptance.

8. *Pre-Depature*-the sojourner prepares for re-entry into his home situation, usually with positive expectations. This is an ideal time for a "de-briefing" conference or other programmed efforts to prepare for going home.

Jacobson advocates that communication patterns are an important index of adjustment at almost every phase. This will include the visitor's efforts at initiating interpersonal contact and his reception of social overtures from hosts. Another indication of involvement and adjustment is the amount and type of host-culture media use. In addition, the nature of the re-entry experience may be somewhat predictable from the nature and extent of "back-home" correspondence, both social and work-related and the amount of effort expended to stay in touch with the home country through magazines, newspaper and broadcasts. Still another dimension is the ratio of association with own countrymen compared with choice of host-country nationals as companions.

In 1962, Ellingsworth proposed a "Study of the Communication Behavior of U.S. Technicians in Latin America" which outlined an investigation of attitudes and communication concerning this group. While never conducted, the design may be applicable to a variety of sojourners. A portion is quoted:

Purpose --This study has the purpose of investigating the behavior of the advisory technician as a receiver and a source of communication in a field situation.

Data would be sought concerning:

A. The sum total of the technician's communication contacts, including--
   1. Nature of initial briefing for job assignment.
   2. Personal contacts inside and outside the organization and work group.
   3. Mass media use.
   4. Interplay of personal communication and mass media use.

B. Technician's perception of change occurring with in his professional or technical specialization.

C. Technician's perception of change occurring in host country and in the U.S.

D. Communication techniques used by the technician in introducing change ideas.

Summary and Implications

The world has changed since the pioneering days of sojourner research. But the sojourner as a rich source of data and insight has not. At least two methods of doing such research are currently viable. One is the method of bi-national or multi-national collaboration. At international gatherings such as the 1985 ICA Honolulu conference, scholars from different countries can establish contacts which might lead to a fuller study of student, business, or other sojourners, from pre-departure through in-sojourn to resettlement. This collaborative method is probably the most economical and efficient for longitudinal studies.

Another involves the use of mail surveys about the in-sojourn experiences of groups such as missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers or multi-national corporation employees. While not as potentially rich as direct contact, mail surveys make possible both descriptive and comparative studies of sojourn description. They are inexpensive and can yield reportable results, despite an expectable problem with percentage of return.

There are many ways to learn more about intercultural contact; none of them are more promising than rediscovering the sojourner.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] The "foreign student" is an ancient concept. There are records of such sojourns to learning centers in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe which indicate at least 2500 yers of such activity. The present scene is perhaps distinguished principally by the institutionalization of the practice.

[2] "An Extension of the U-Curve Hypothesis, "*Journal of Social Issues*, XIX, No. 3, p. 34

[3] "Attitudes and adjustment in cross-cultural contact: recent studies of foreign students, "*Journal of Social Issues*, XII, No. 1, 1966.

[4] Some other investigators who have made contributions to sojourn adjustment literature include J.W. Bennett, G. Coelho, R.D. Lambert, W. Sewall, J. Veroff, S. Deutsch, G. Won, S. Lesser, and H. Peter.

[5] Useem, John, and others, "Men In the Middle of the Third Culture, "*Human organization* 22:pp. 169-79.

[6] (New York: Praeger, 1968).

[7] Paper presented to the Speech Communication Association, New Orleans, December 29, 1970. (Department of Communication, University of Hawaii. mimeograph).

[8] "Communication and Decision-Making Behavior of IEC Admimistrators in the Philippines and Malaysia," Case Study 82, Working Papers in Population Communication,

East-West Communication Institute, Honolulu, 1973.

"A Mail Interview of Participants at the AID-MSU Seminar NO. 249 Following their Return Home," (Department of Communication, University of Hawaii, Mimeograph, 1968).

[10] The writer recalls being held half a day at a Latin-American frontier while customs and immigration officials assessed the risks of allowing entry to a suitcase full of blank questionnaires.

[11] Certainly the Tasaday people of the Philippines are so different in behavior from their contemporaries as to deserve the label "unique", but not one knows whether they invented the way they live.

[12] A notable exception is Peter Adler, "Beyond Cultural Identity: Reflections Upon Cutural and Multicultural Man," Topics in Cultural Learning, Brislin, R. (ed.) East-West Center, Honolulu, Vol. 2, 1974, pp. 23-40.

[13] "Sojourn Research: A Definition of the Field," Journal of Social Issues. July 1963, XIX, No. 3 pp. 123-29.